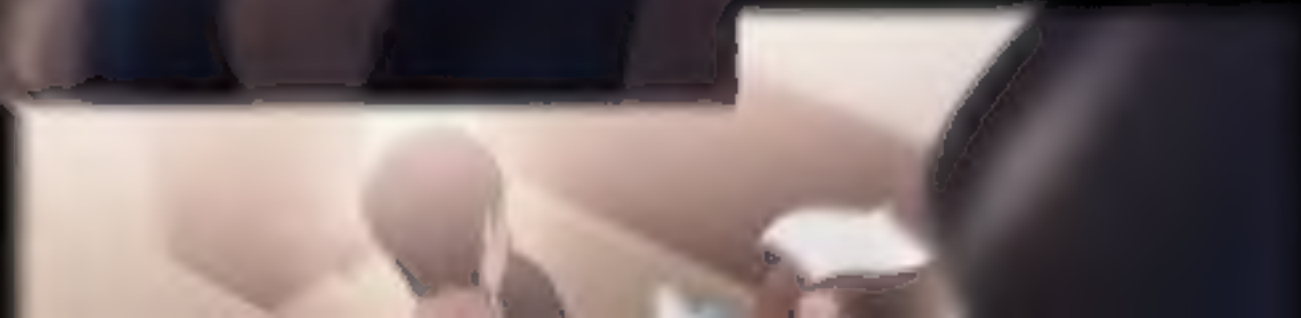


ECSTASY: HEARTS





Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a signature or a note, positioned vertically along the right edge of the image.





19

Guilt





Koizumi Residence
2:35 A.M. Tokyo



Sign: Koizumi

Ding..

Dong..

Ding..

Dong..

Ding..

Dong..

Toru! It's me,
Nathan.

Can we talk?

Ding..

Dong..

Ding..

Dong..

Ping..
Dong..



It's not
locked?

I'm coming in.

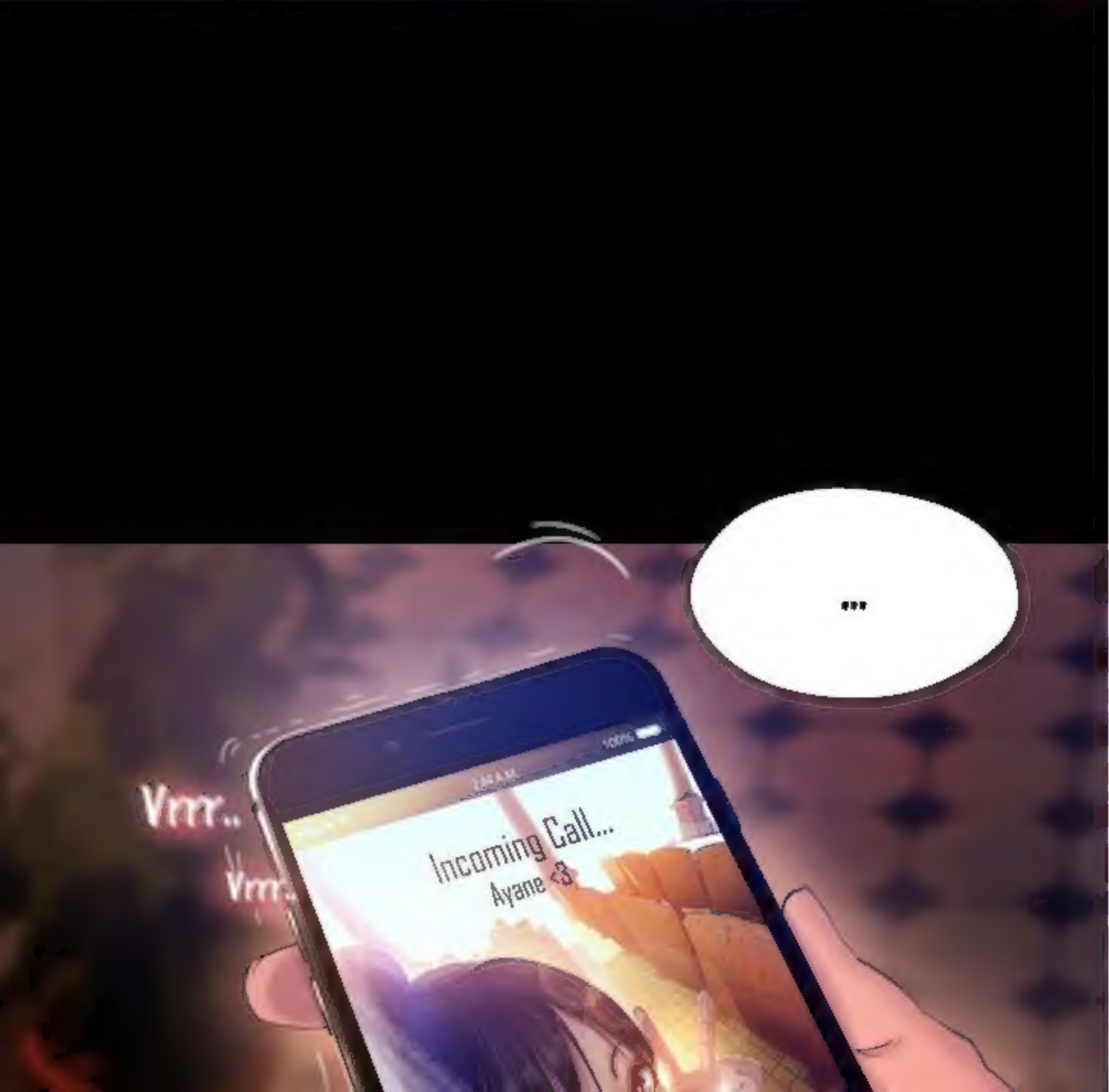


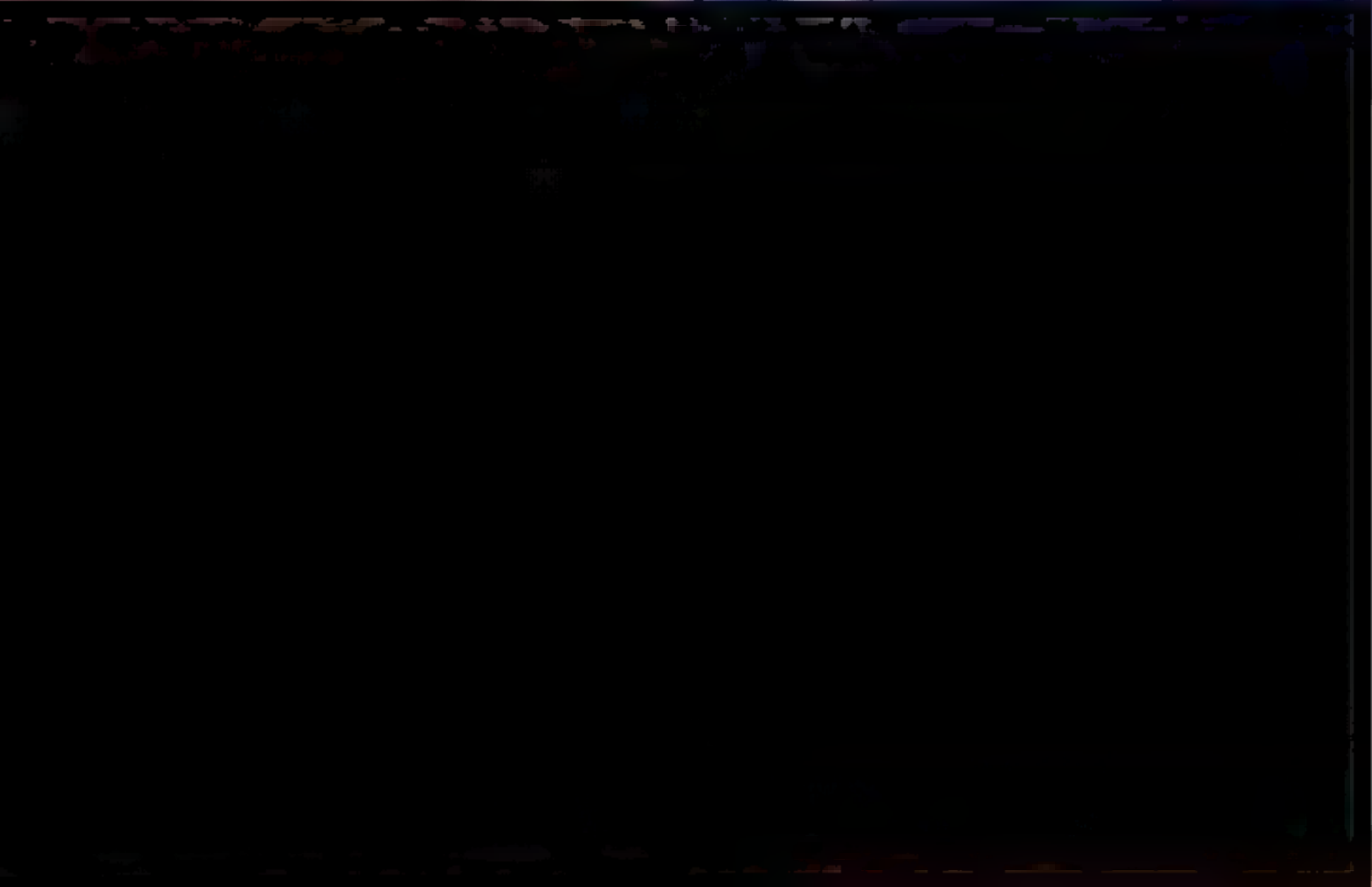
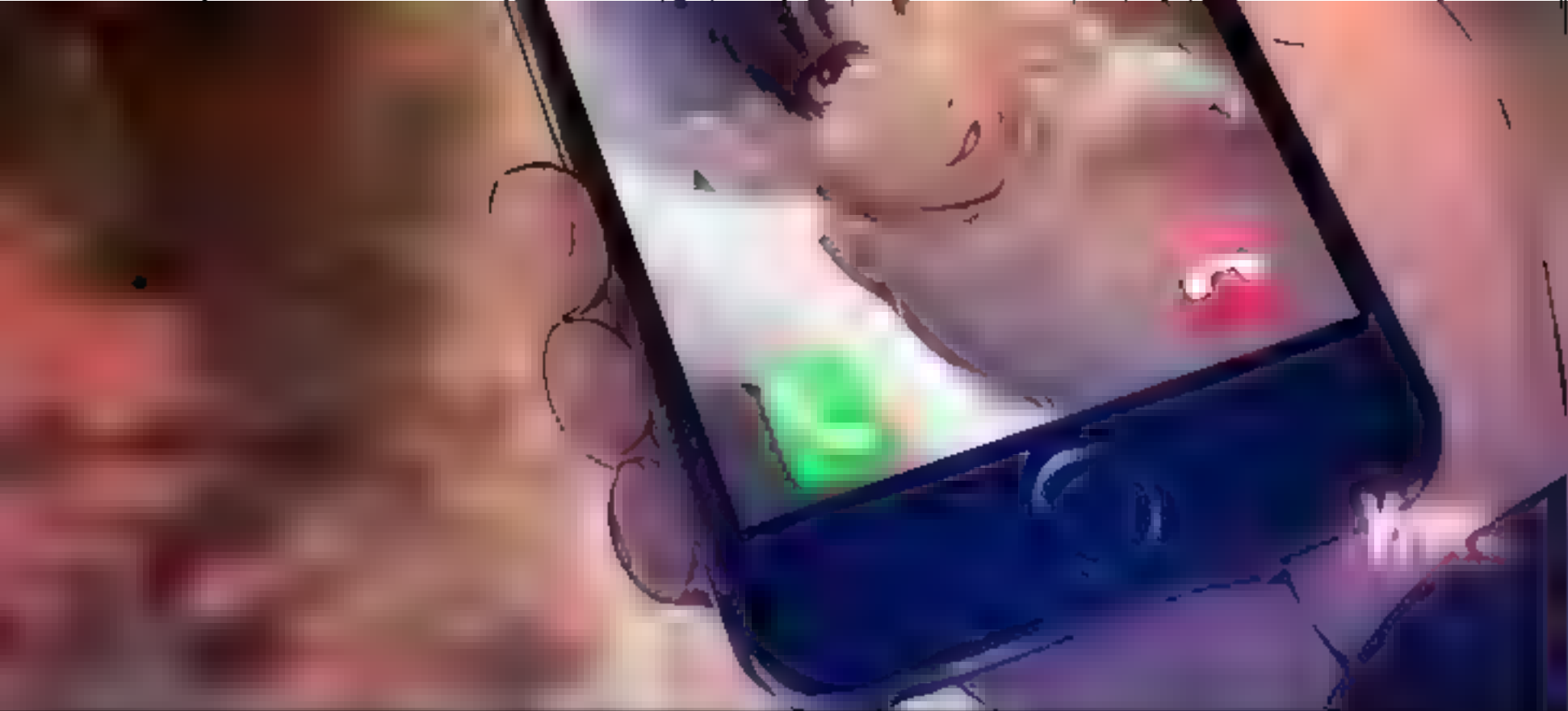


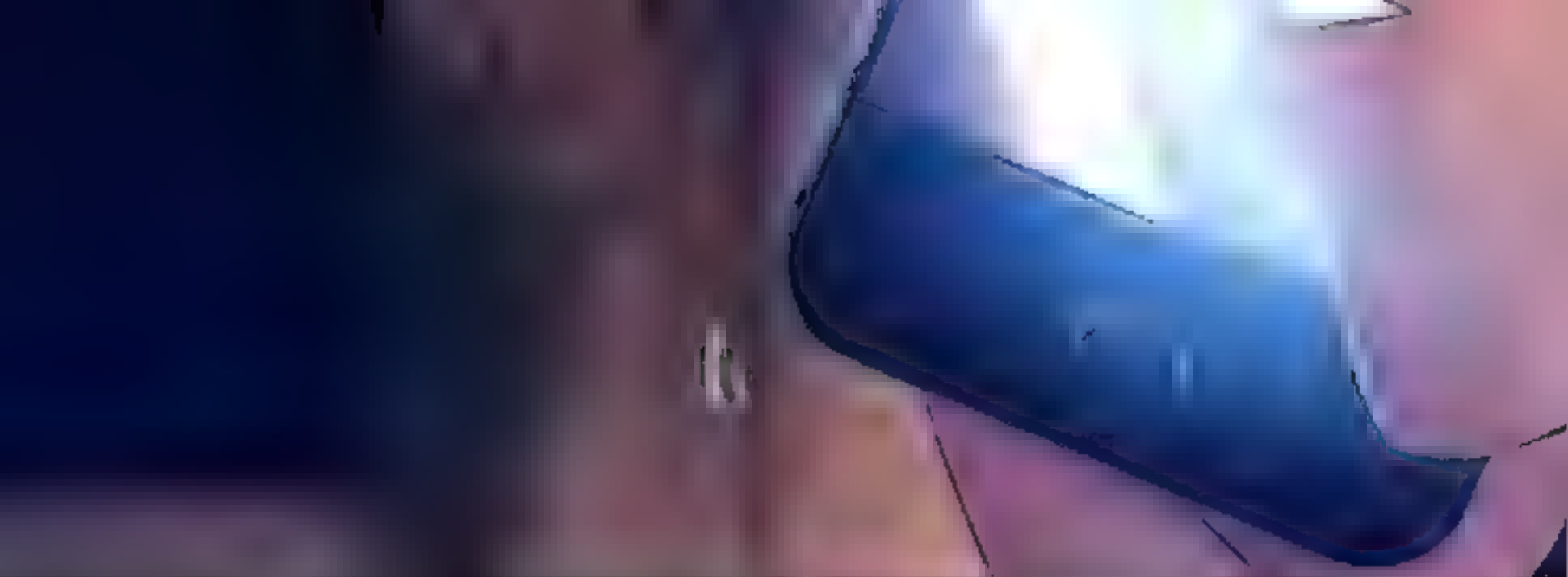
Hey buddy.
It's me,
Nathan.

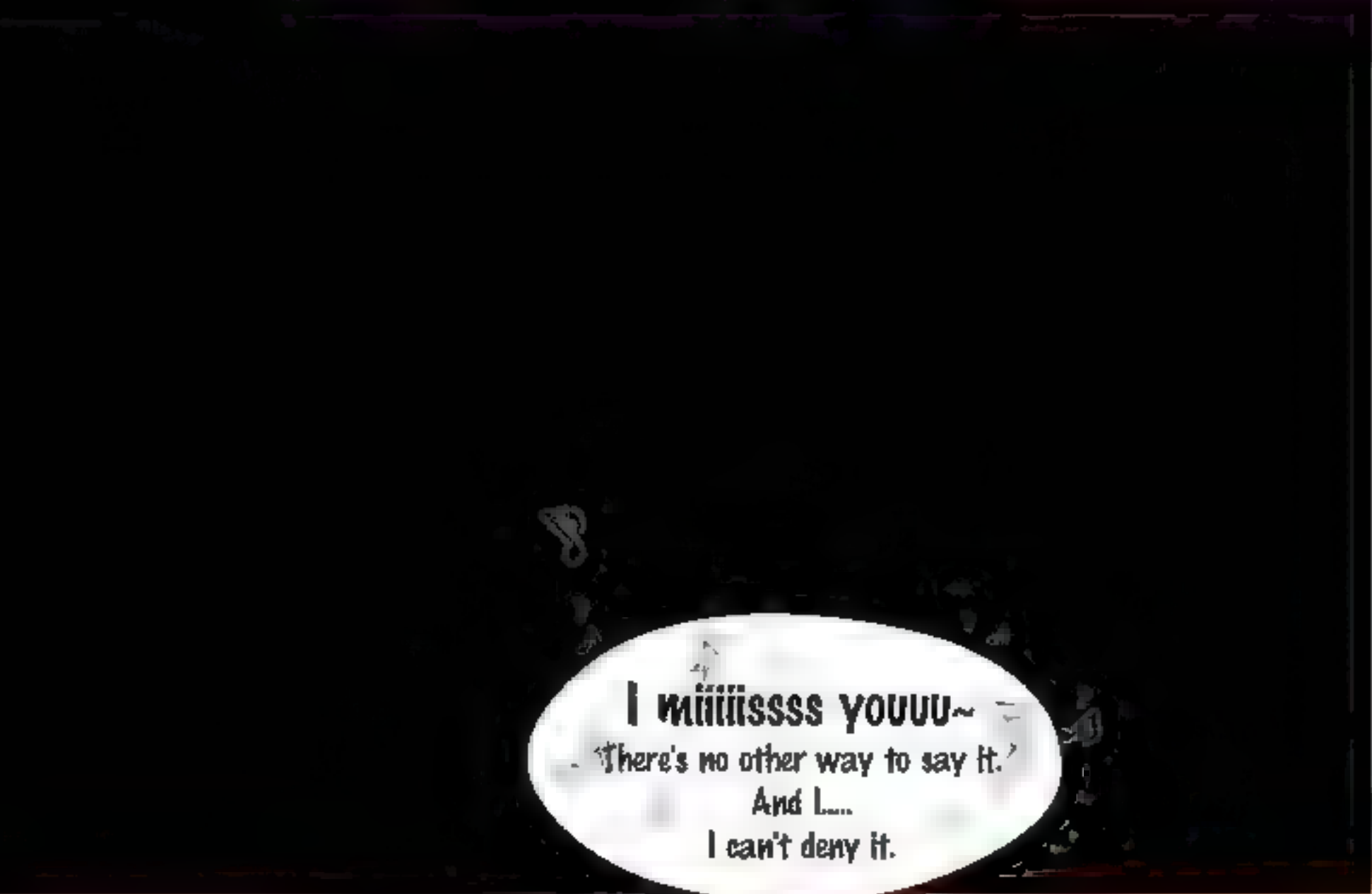
Can we talk?

Vrrr..







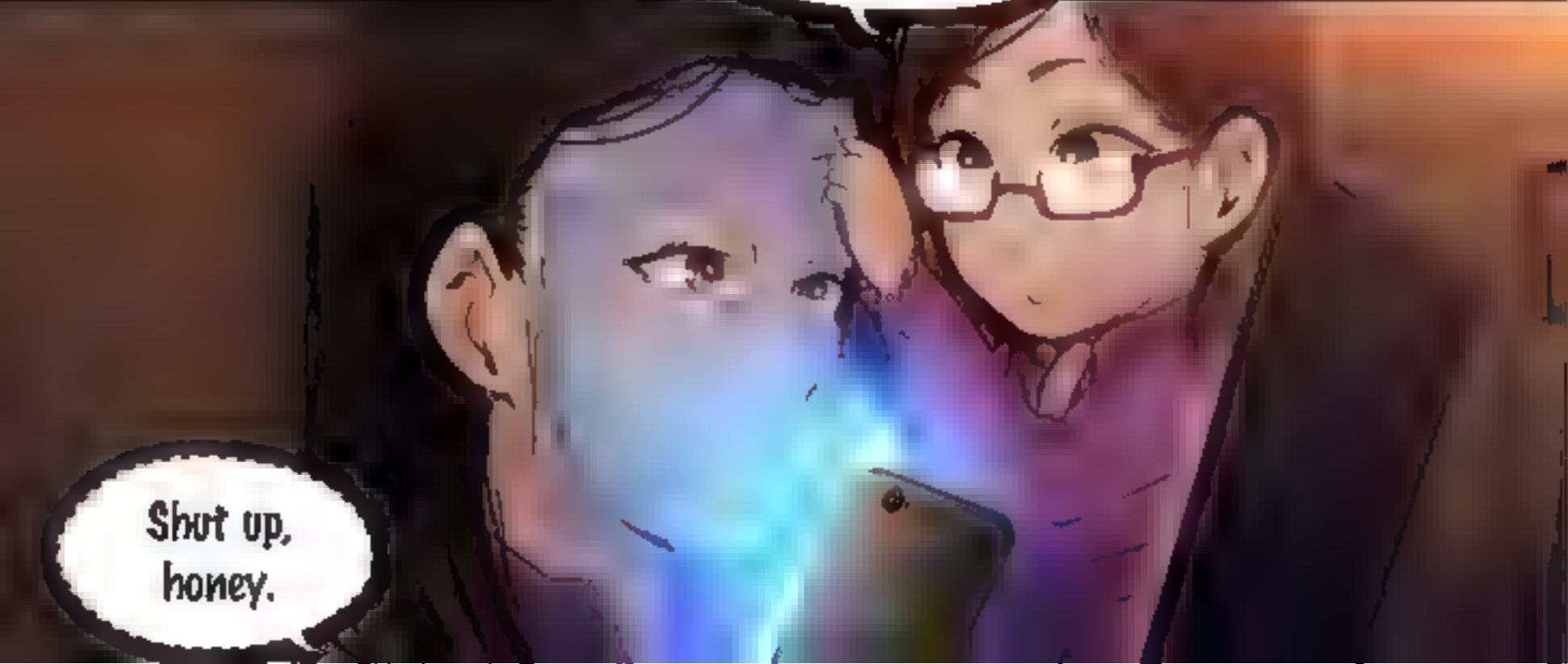


I misssssss youuu~

There's no other way to say it.

And I....

I can't deny it.



Shot up,
honey.



Nathan,
are you there?
Is the child safe?

I just arrived.
Nothing seems unusual
but I feel uneasy.

Hun..
Kenzou said
"someone" spoke with
Toru, right?

How were they able to
convince him?
He's not the type to trust easily.
Who do you think the person
he spoke with? Any idea?



...Sumire?
I don't think so.



I don't think so.
Sumire is brilliant but
she's just a kid.

Nevermind.
For now our concern
is the child's safety.

That aside Nathan,
remember this will be the last time
I'm letting you see your ex-lover,
understood?



A dark, moody scene with a person in a doorway. The person is wearing a dark jacket and is looking towards the camera. The background is dark and blurry, with some light sources visible. The overall tone is somber and mysterious.

Don't get any ideas.

I'm not jealous.

I just had enough getting involved
with those stupid rumours.

I'm fed up.

Yeah,
I know.



I'm here
for the child.
Nothing more.

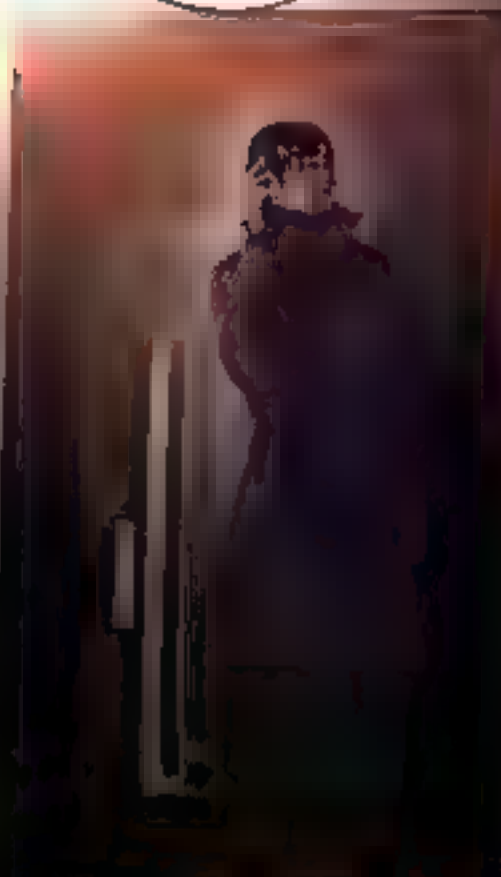
Okay.

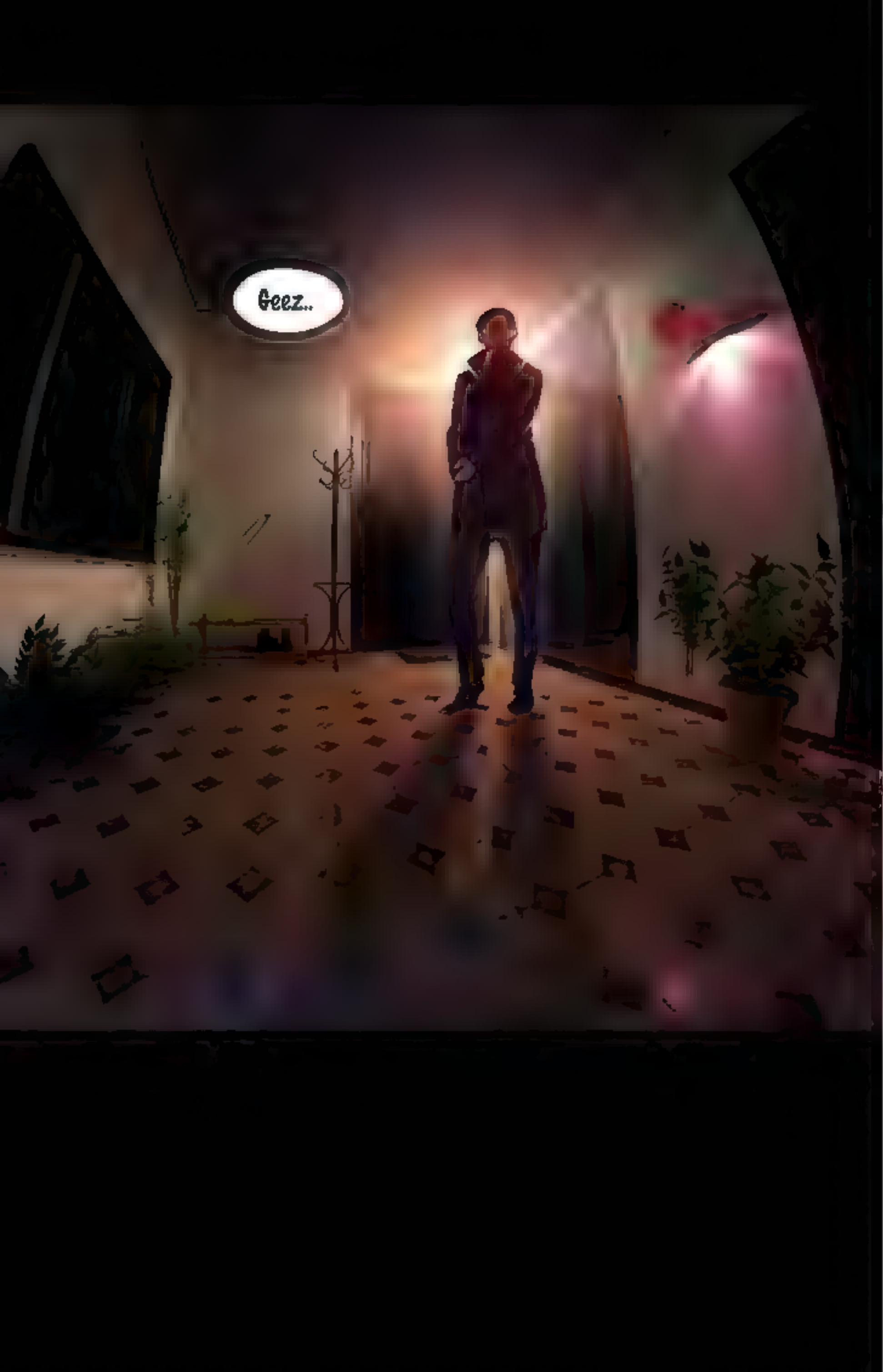
I'm hanging up
now. Anya fell
asleep.

Be careful.
Okay?

I will.

Hun,
I lov-..





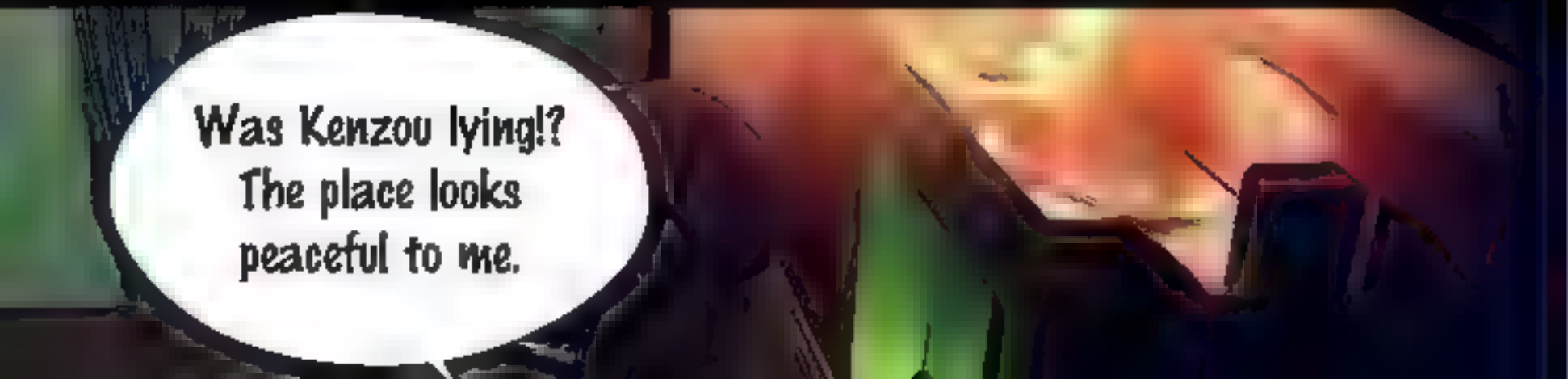




A blurry, high-contrast image of a building's exterior, possibly a house. The image is dark and grainy, with a warm, orange-brown light source on the left. Two speech bubbles are overlaid on the image. The first speech bubble is on the left, and the second is on the right.

Anybody
home?

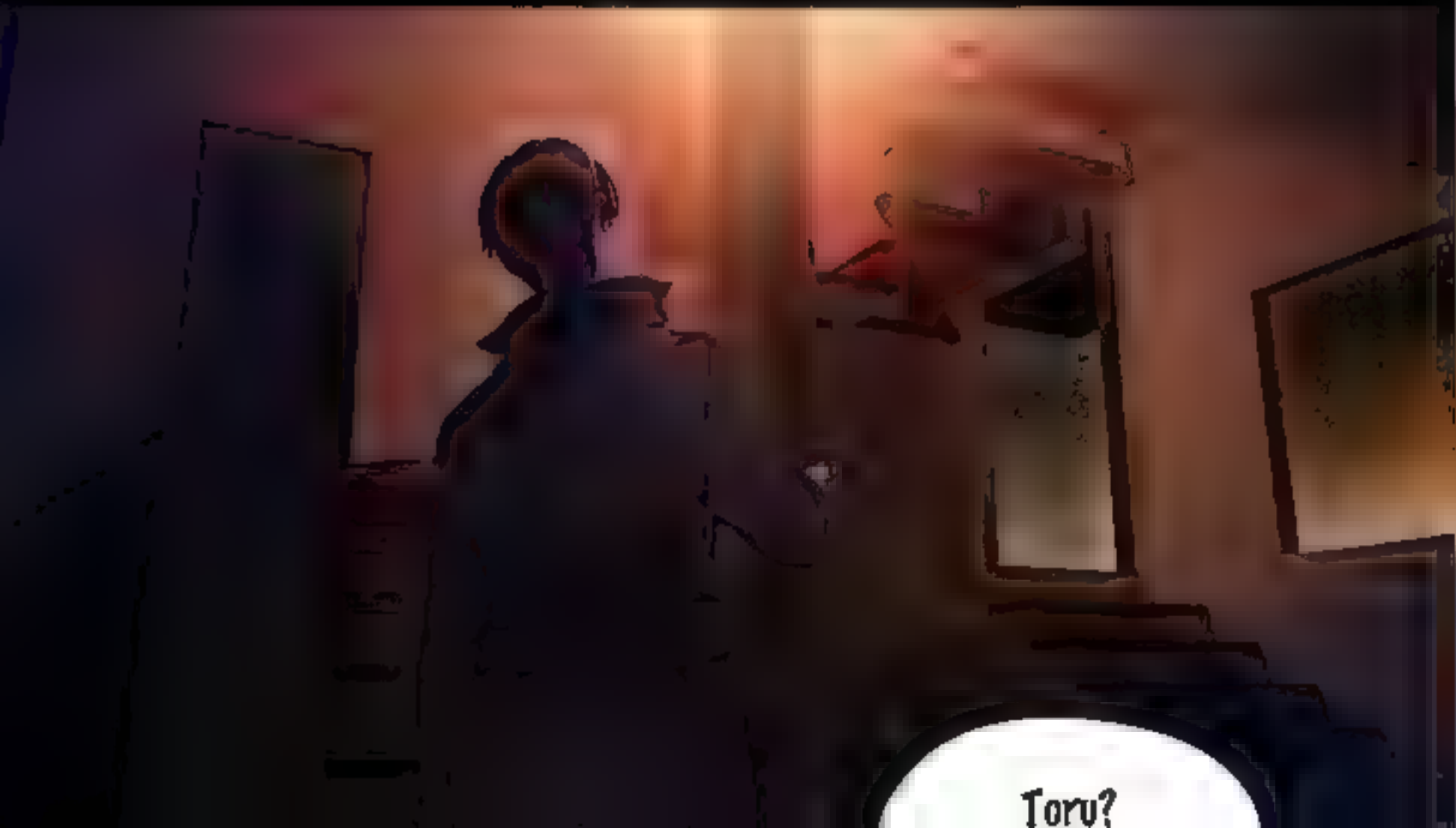
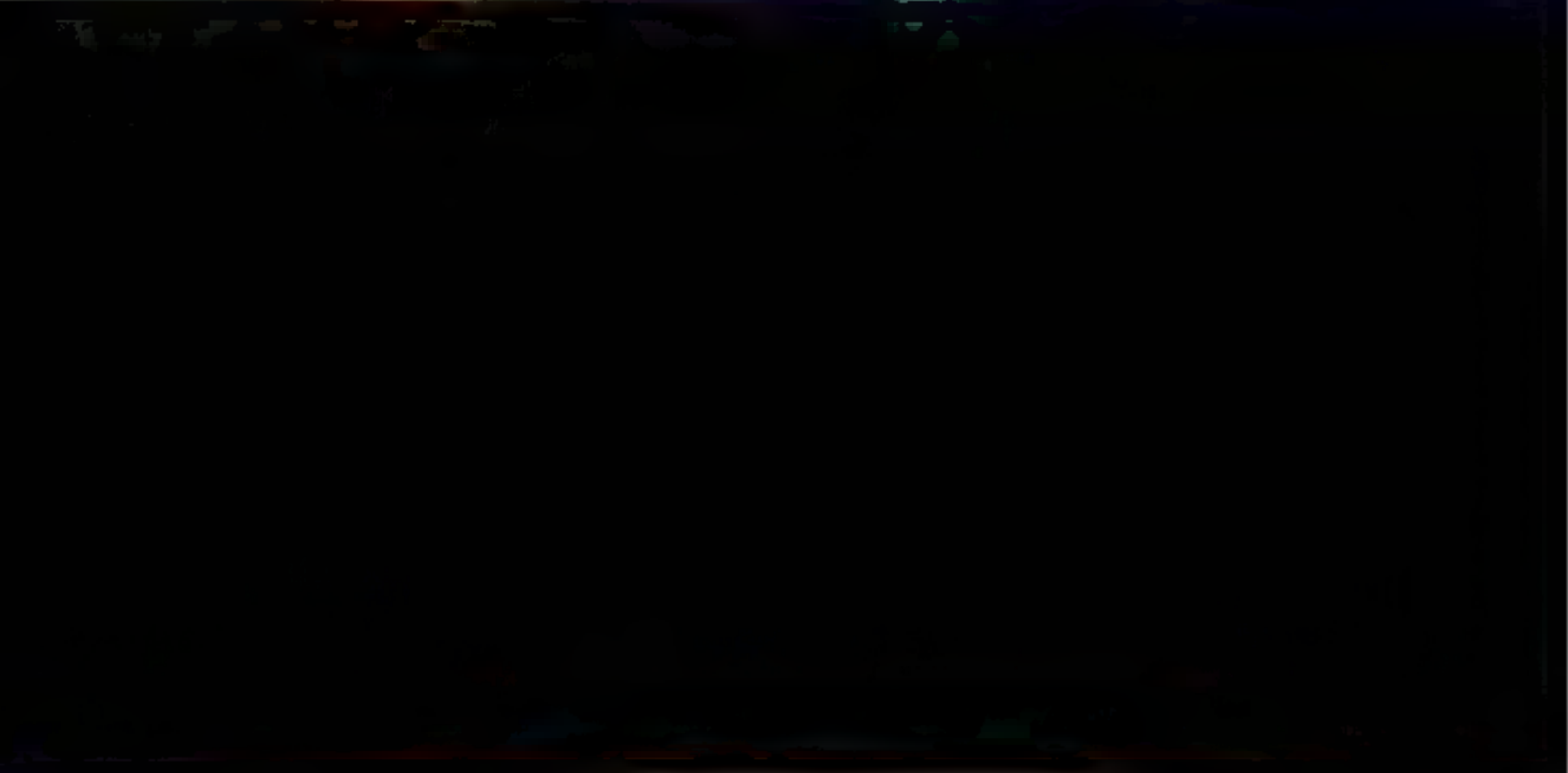
Toru!

A blurry, high-contrast image of a building's exterior, possibly a house. The image is dark and grainy, with a warm, orange-brown light source on the left. A speech bubble is overlaid on the image.

Was Kenzou lying!?
The place looks
peaceful to me.



I might be worrying
for nothing.



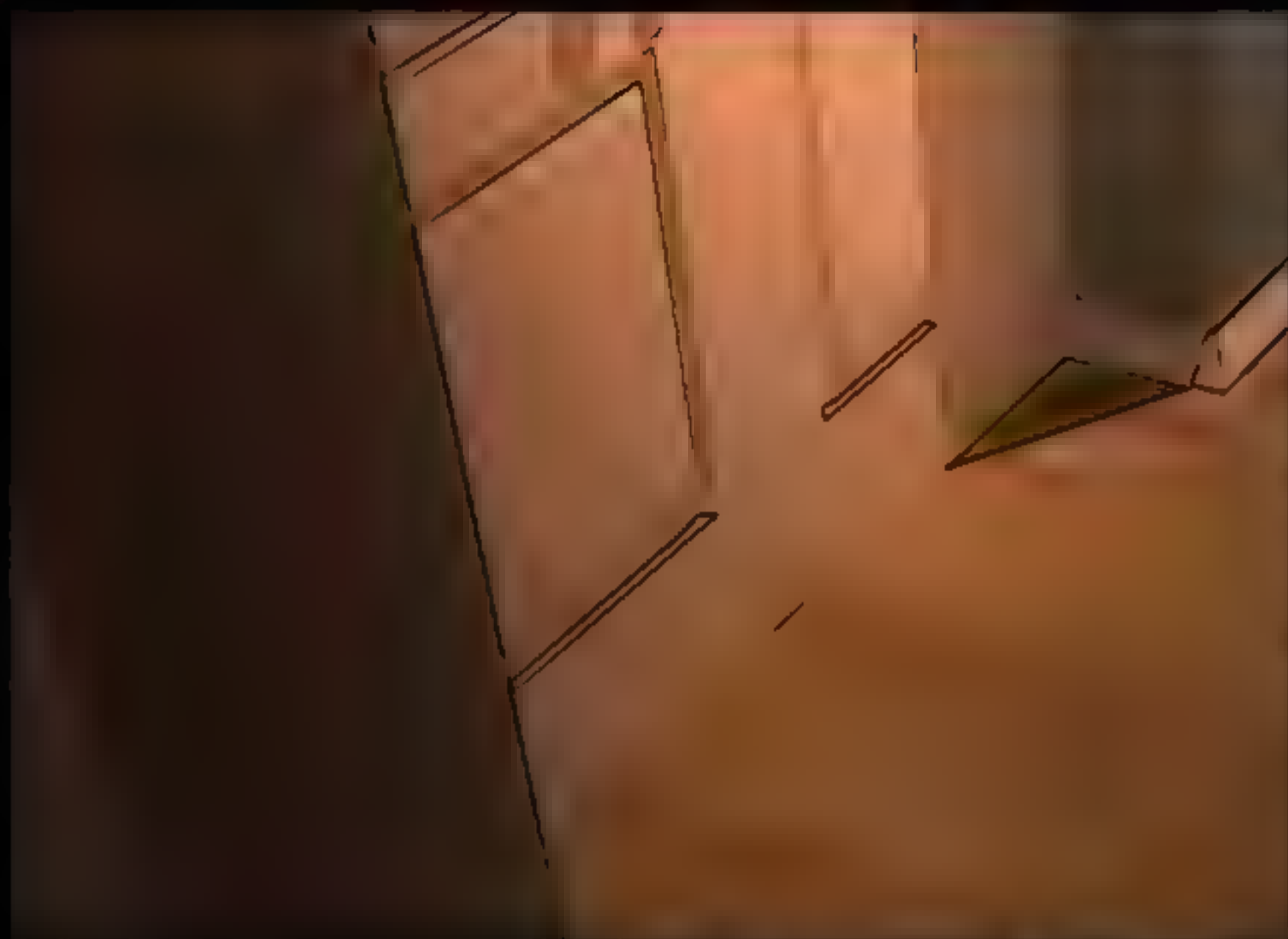
Toru?

Sara?

They could still
be asleep..



1894



1894

sob..





What
the-?!!

Are you alright?
What happened!?

...









It's your
Grandfather.
A voice message for you.
Don't you want to hear
the good news?

Mom,
I'm too tired.
Give me a break.

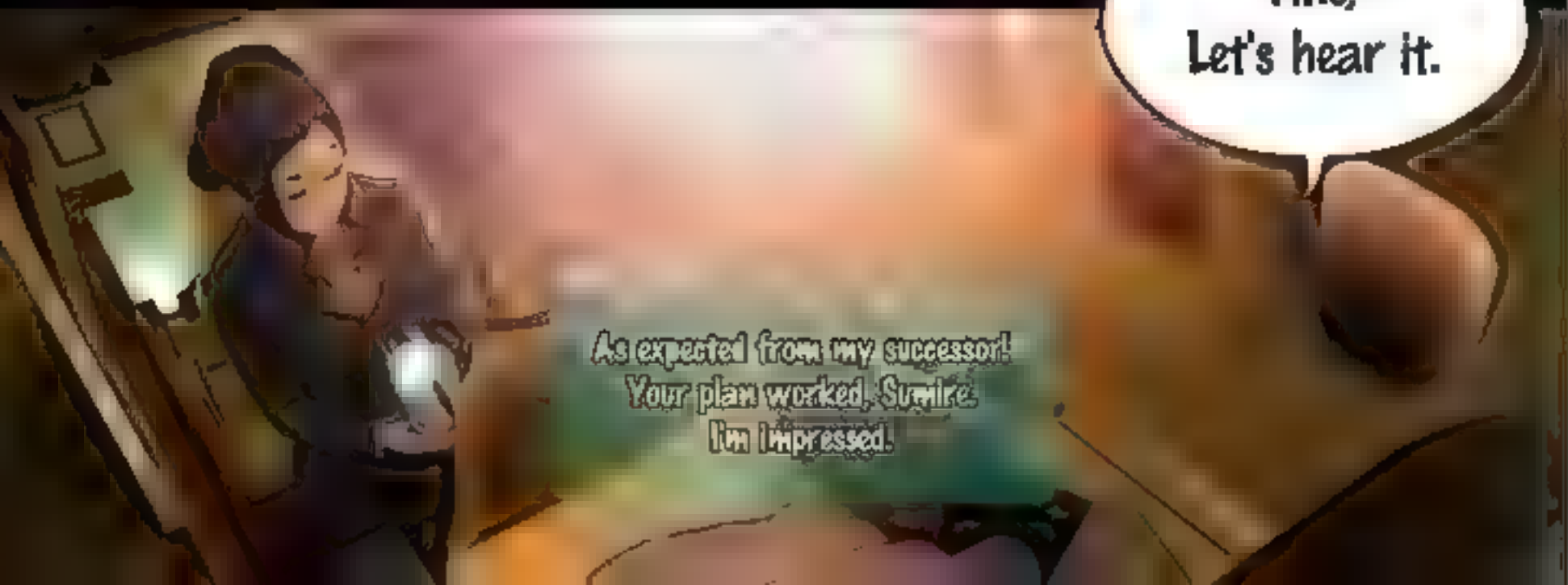
We have to celebrate..
I am the proudest Mother
on Earth right now.



Come on.
Just hear it.

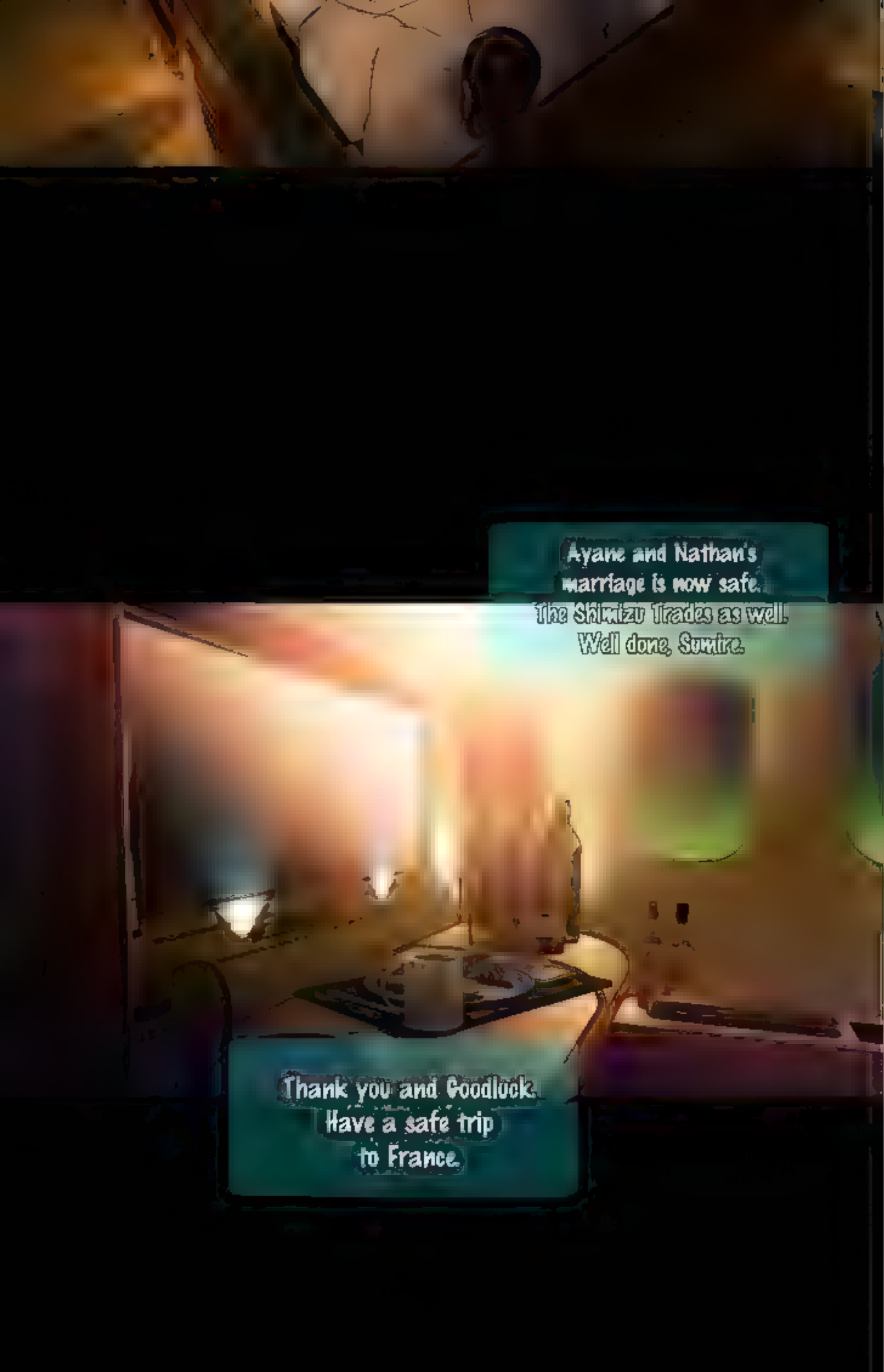


Is that true?



Fine,
Let's hear it.

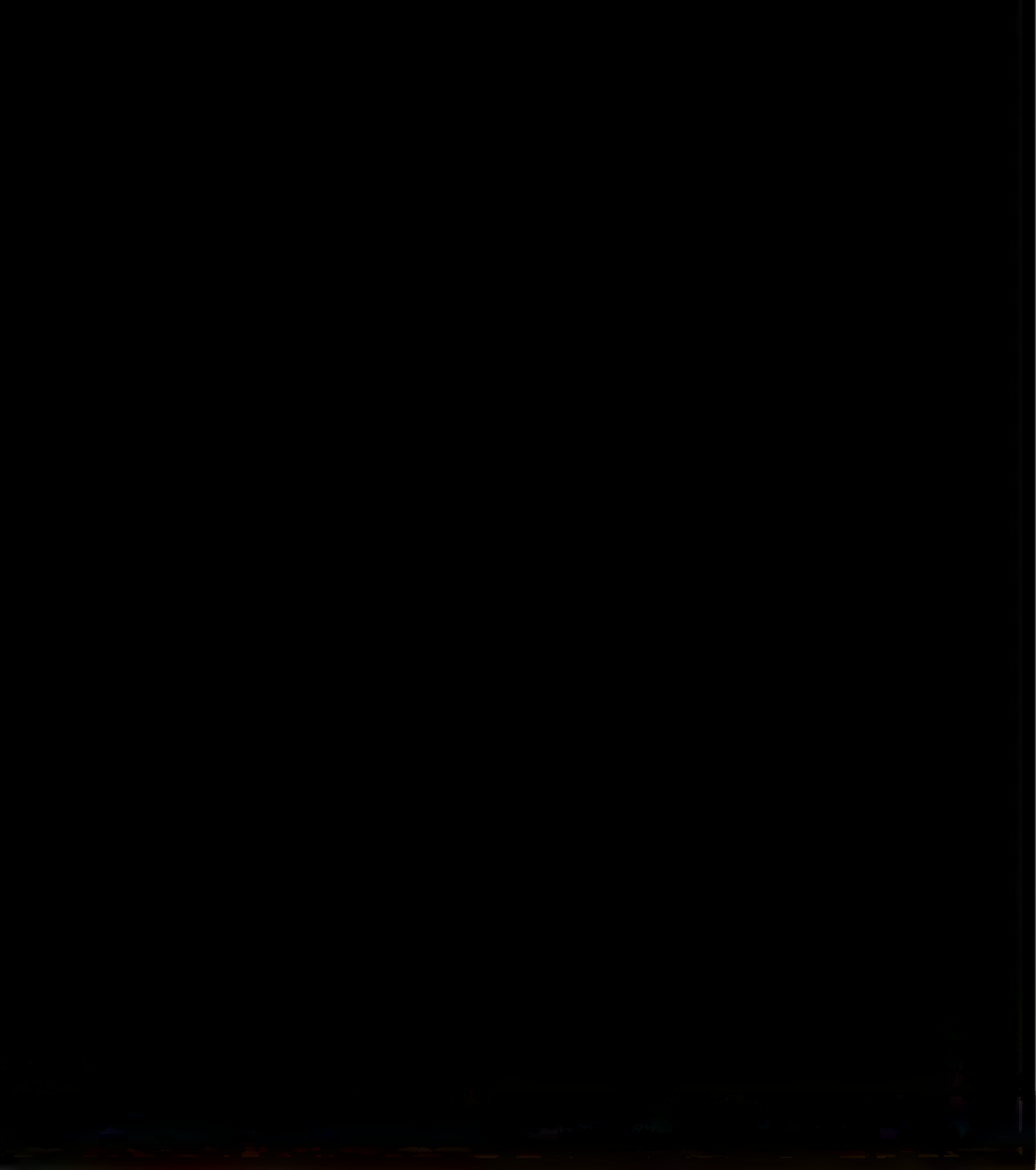
As expected from my successor!
Your plan worked, Sumire.
I'm impressed!

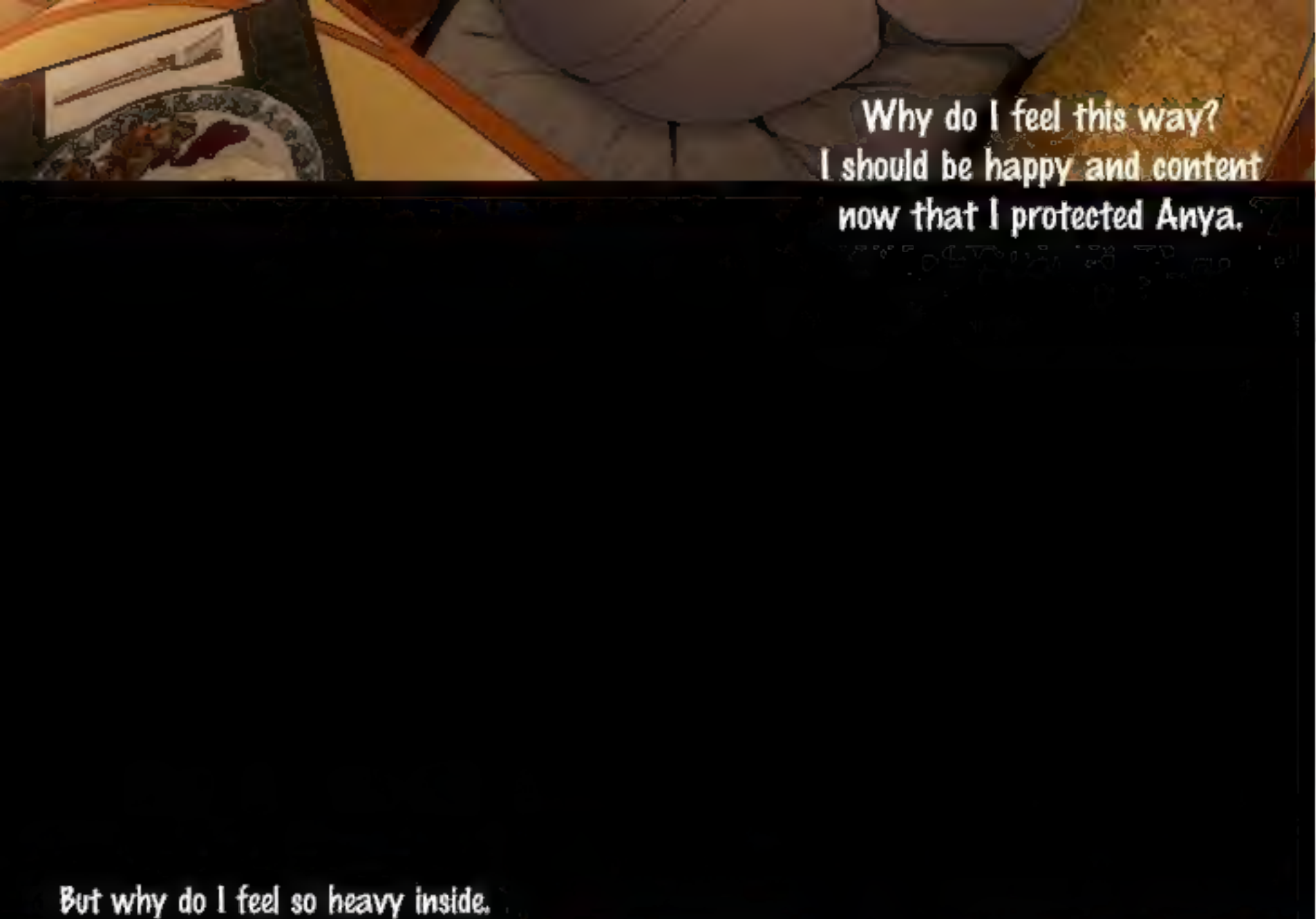


Ayane and Nathan's
marriage is now safe.

The Shimizu Trades as well.
Well done, Sumire.

Thank you and Goodluck.
Have a safe trip
to France.





Why do I feel this way?
I should be happy and content
now that I protected Anya.

But why do I feel so heavy inside.



I don't understand.

Nathaniel..



I felt sorry for him.

To protect Aunt Ayane and Uncle Nathan's
marriage, he paid the price.



If only he wasn't Nathan's illegitimate child...



..we could have been "friends".



To be continued...

Story and art: Silent

Credits to:

Gary Moore (3D Room Model)